

February 2, 2023

Joint Committee in Transportation

Ref: HB 2781

Chairs Gorsek and McLain and committee members,

I'm writing in support of HB 2781. This bill would allow for the creation of a bridge district in the mid-Willamette valley region but only if the people living here choose to do so. As the Salem City Councilor for Ward 1, which covers the downtown area from State St north to Pine St and over the bridge into West Salem, I have heard often that yes, we need another option from crossing the Willamette in our area but we need to share the cost among those who use the service. No single city should be expected to fit the bill for a project that will benefit many in the region and those doing commerce throughout our area and beyond. Residents also speak often about wanting more input in where a bridge will go and what it would look like. To sum up the many conversations I've had, people want more local control, they want more flexibility and they want all who would benefit to have a part in paying for it.

Another aspect I hear about often is that we currently have traffic from all the surrounding areas using our downtown to gain access to the only viable crossing in the area, especially for freight. With this area of town undergoing a huge change in use with more and more housing being built here, the amount of through traffic, and the type of traffic, stands in contrast with the new developments and shift to active transportation within the area.

The district could also be used to help maintain the infrastructure we currently have; this adds to the resiliency of our area and helps us be good stewards to our built environment. We also need to be planning ahead for our future and if that future has another crossing in it, we need to have all voices at the table with creative options for how to complete the project. This bill does just that.

I want to end by thanking Representative Evans for bringing forward a creative idea that I think could help us come together as a community and work through our common struggles towards a good end.

Respectfully,

Virginia Stapleton

Salem City Councilor - Ward 1